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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray. Eternal Steward, we praise You for being with us this day, for You have embraced our Nation as a prize possession, providing us with protection when we need it most.

Sustain our lawmakers as they seek to do Your will. Empower them to see You more clearly, love You more dearly, and follow You more nearly this day and always. May they look to You for guidance, claiming Your promise to direct their steps. In challenging times, give them the wisdom to lift their eyes to You to receive Your grace and mercy.

Most Holy God, thank You for your love and faithfulness.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in morning business until 5:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

At 5:30 p.m. the Senate will proceed to four rolloall votes in relation to the

child care and development block grant bill and the Abrams, Cohen, and Ross nominations.

WORKING TOGETHER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in that great play "Fiddler on the Roof," Tevye says, among other things, and I quote: Good news will stay, and bad news will refuse to leave.

In Washington we all too often focus on the bad news that lingers instead of highlighting the many good things that are being accomplished. ObamaCare is a perfect example. The Affordable Care Act is working. Americans who have enrolled in health plans through the Affordable Care Act are happy with their coverage.

There was a very good article in newspapers all over the country today, including in the Washington Post, which I saw. In this article there is a citation of a recent Gallup survey of Americans who have coverage through ObamaCare, and the findings are very positive—and that is a gross understatement. Seventy-four percent of ObamaCare enrollees rate their coverage as good or excellent. Seventy-five percent say they are satisfied with the cost of their plans. I will repeat that. Seventy-four percent of ObamaCare enrollees rate their coverage as good or excellent, and 75 percent say they are satisfied with the cost of their plans. That is good news to me.

The Affordable Care Act is working for the American people. It is providing quality, affordable health care to families all across our country.

The Senate has a lot of work to do before the 113th Congress comes to a close. There are a few important priorities in this work period. We have to pass an extension of tax credits for American families and businesses. We have to pass the Defense authorization bill, and the President pro tempore of the Senate is concerned about extend-

ing the FISA legislation, the American freedom act. It is so important that we do these things, but also we have to fund our government. That has to be done very soon because early next month the funding expires. We have many nominations that have not been completed. Almost 200 have been held up by my Republican colleagues. John Kerry, the Secretary of State, called me and said he himself had almost 100—well, that is exaggerating a little. He had 60-some; I don't remember the exact number.

We must keep our government funded. I have been having productive bipartisan conversations with Speaker BOEHNER, the Republican leader, and Appropriations chair Senator MIKULSKI. It is clear to me that Republican leaders want to work together to keep the government funded. We have heard there are going to be no government shutdowns from the leaders, but Members of their caucuses are really saying some very scary things.

So the question is whether the Republican leaders will be able to stand up to the radical forces within their own party. It is more than just one or two people; it is a large number of Members of the Republican caucus in the Senate and, of course, the Republican caucus in the House. Can these Republican leaders stand up to these people who are intent on holding our government hostage? There has been a lot of talk the past 3 or 4 days: So we have a government shutdown; so what?

It has become increasingly clear these last few days that a number of Republicans are looking for an example to use to get their ideas—that are somewhat bizarre in the minds of most people—they are using a number of different things as an excuse: Executive action; the President is not doing enough on making sure the Iranians are held down tightly; and on and on with everything they have as an excuse to derail bipartisan legislation to fund the government.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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